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FAMILY PHOTOS MAY BE USEFUL IN DOCUMENTING ECOLOGICAL CHANGES

As the adage says, a picture is worth a thousand words. That is particularly true for researchers who are documenting ecological conditions of Utah's forests and rangelands. Utah State University researchers, working with the Utah Division of Forestry, Fire and State Lands, are seeking old photographs from private collections taken in the Dixie National Forest and surrounding areas.

The project uses what is called repeat photography to compile a long-term perspective of ecological changes on the land. The concept is simple, find a historical photo and rephotograph it today taken from the exact same place the original photographer stood. It's then easy to see how things have changed in the intervening years.

"The trick is getting the right historical photographs to begin," said Clint Reese, Area Forester with the Division of Forestry, Fire and State Lands. "To be useful the photo should show general vegetation conditions and must contain known landmarks or other identifiable features so the original camera position can be relocated."

It is preferred that photos be taken prior to 1930 and those taken during the late 1800s are even better. Original photos are not harmed and will be returned to owners within three or four weeks. Anyone who may wish to participate in the Dixie Repeat-Photo project may contact the Division of Forestry, Fire and State Lands at 435-586-4408, or Utah State University Extension at 435-586-8132.

"A similar photo project conducted on the Fishlake National Forest resulted in 355 photosets," noted Chad Reid, Agricultural Agent with Utah State University. "The project found Utah's rangelands in generally better condition today than they were during the early 1900s." It also noted that, contrary to popular perception; coniferous trees and forests are more abundant today. Photos, as well as descriptive text, can be found on Utah State University's Extension web site at <http://extension.usu.edu/rra>.

The repeat photography project is under the direction of Dr. Charles Kay, Adjunct Associate Professor of Political Science, at USU, and is being conducted with the cooperation of the U.S.D.A. Forest Service and the Dixie National Forest.

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